From: Ryan, James (FTA)
To: Carranza, Edward (FTA); VanWyk, Christopher (FTA)
Sent: 11/20/2009 11:34:06 AM
Subject: Update on the Honolulu runway issue

Susan asked me to prepare a summary of today's call so that she can keep the administrator up to date. I'm hesitant to send this draft to the assembled multitude in fear of getting parallel adjustments throughout the evening. So, I'm hoping the two of you can serve as representative reviewers. I'm telecommuting if you want to discuss: 703-754-2576. Thanks in advance.

TRO-09, TPM, and TPE met by conference call today (November 20) to clarify the status of the runway issue at the Honolulu airport and to consider alternatives for proceeding.

The issue arises because a change by FAA in the runway protection zone (RPZ) requirement was missed by the City and its engineers as they finalized the alignment through the airport. Consequently, the current alignment of the rail project fails to meet the revised requirement. FTA's PMOC identified this problem in June 2009 and the City has been reluctant to deal with its implications in hopes of meeting their aggresive schedule.

This issue has become the principal barrier to completion and publication of the FEIS. The City has obtained sign-offs from FAA and Hawaii DOT on letters from the City to FTA outlining what the City hopes is a way forward. The letters acknowledge the problem, identify adjustments to the runways as the likely solution, and promise a study of to determine the details of runway adjustments. The promised study is insufficient for FTA purposes in finalizing the FEIS, however, because can bring closure to the issue only at some undetermined point in the future. The FEIS must present a specific rail alignment, identify its impact on the RPZ, and commit to specific mitigations of those impacts (including secondary impacts of the runway adjustments), and document the costs of all mitigations. A study of these mitigations will require an effort that involves an ongoing update of the aiport master plan and an uncertain timeframe that may extend well into 2010.

Today's conference call concluded with agreement to pursue two approaches to a resolution of the airport issue sufficient to enable finalization and publication of the FEIS.

First, FTA will convey to the City (1) FTA's conclusion that the FAA and HDOT sign-offs on letters outlining future analysis of the issue are an insufficient basis for finalizing the FEIS, and (2) outlines an alternative approach that will bring closure in a reasonable timeframe: the development of an avoidance alternative that complies with the new RPZ requirement and thereby avoids any need to pursue runway adjustments, mitigations of consequent on-airport impacts, and coordination with HDOT's update of the aiport master plan. Development of an avoidance alternative will require some effort by the City to determine an alignment and station location, prepare engineering materials, identify impacts and their mitigations, and estimate costs. The level of effort and timeframe will depend on the complexity of the avoidance alternative and the extent to which the City has already considered alignment options in the vicinity. FTA would commit to efficient coordination by assigning the PMOC to review options and their analysis as the City's work proceeds on the avoidance alternative.

Second, FTA will initiate contact with FAA headquarters to explore options for proceeding. FAA's regulations provide for a waiver of RPZ requirements. FTA will inquire on the possibilities of a waiver given the other structures (buildings and an elevated freeway) proximate to the proposed rail alignment and station location.